

“More for your Right Brain...”

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Over the last 25 years I have gone through stressful times with clients. The stress has not always been caused by the marketplace. Quite often it is family, career, and the constant striving towards future goals. The current economy and market volatility has amplified these stress levels.

This year has been quite intense, and many clients are worried that the world is going to end as they know it. I actually have been quite surprised by my younger clients who have shown much worry and panic. Most clients in their early 30s do not have enough skin in the game. They just worry about keeping their job and making things happen. My 40 year olds now have skin in the game and have shown the most panic and fear. I guess you can contribute it to the fact that they are most likely knee-deep in children, mortgages and the height of career building.

Now, this is not to say my 50 and 60-year-olds have not shown concern, but I think some of that gray hair has not only given them a distinguished look but also a mark of experience. This experience may mellow their emotions and has built an underlying confidence that they have survived this far and will continue to survive.

I read an article recently written by Robert Brooks, PhD, a psychologist out of Harvard Medical School. He was writing about how people cope with stress. For many of you, these times are extremely stressful and you may feel you are on an emotional roller coaster. Let's face it, every day the news and the pundits sway your mood from one extreme to another. It may feel that this is the first time in your life where your mood (confidence level) swings as dramatically as the Dow.

The author wrote that there are three styles used to cope with stress. My experience over the years finds his theory to be dead on.

There are three coping styles: *The Dragon*, *The Absent Ostrich* and *The Owl*.

Let's look at the coping styles and see where we fit in:

The Dragon - The dragon is furious! Dr. Brooks says they expresses anger, brooding and may even lash out. The anger is used to mask anxiety and vulnerability. Rather than acknowledge their worries they lash out. They believe their anger is justified especially since they are not aware of their underlying fears.

The Absent Ostrich - Well, like you guessed, they ignore everything that is going on around them. They don't want to hear or see or acknowledge the bad news. They gain a sense of control through denial and ignorance.

The Owl - The owl stays calm and analyzes all data. They tend to look beyond the here and now and are less likely to become impulsive and panicky.

Now, we all would like to say "who", but c'mon, we all cannot be owls now can we? I do feel each client reflects one of these styles. However, at different phases I think all three styles can be evident in that same client. Some are initially dragons. Then get so upset they stick their head in the ground and become an ostrich. When they are ready, they come out and climb up on their perch as the owl.

My goal is to help all those dragons and ostriches to become more like an owl, and for you owls out there I hope to continue to feed you the data and support your needs.

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